THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The value of Indian rupee has appreciated against US$ by 3.9% in May, 2003 compared to April, 2002, though the rupee has depreciated by 20.6% against the Euro for the same period. Currencies of various countries like French Franc, German Mark, Indonesian Rupiah, Japanese Yen, New Zealand Dollar, Swiss Franc and Singapore Dollar have also appreciated *vis-a-vis* the US$ in the last one year. However, India's exports of merchandise goods have registered a growth rate of 19.2% in dollar terms in 2002-03 compared to 2001-02.

Tobacco consumption

9. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA:
SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Bidi and tobacco chewing accounts for 48% and 38% of the tobacco production, respectively;

(b) whether there is any Government infrastructure to verify tar and nicotine contents; and

(c) the action proposed to make an effective legislation to cover all sorts of tobacco consumers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) Available statistics suggest that bidis and chewing tobacco account for about 30% and 29% respectively of the total tobacco production.

(b) There is no Government infrastructure to verify tar and nicotine contents in tobacco products at present. However, the recently enacted. The Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003" provides for grant of recognition to testing laboratories for testing of nicotine and tar contents in cigarettes and other tobacco products. Action in this direction has been initiated.

(c) "The Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of

Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003" provides for measures like total ban on advertisement of tobacco products, prohibition of smoking in public places, ban on sale of tobacco products to persons below 18 years of age and within a radius of 100 yards of educational institutions to discourage the use of tobacco products. The Act covers all tobacco products and is applicable to the whole country.

Export of low quality wheat by STC

10. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether STC has exported low quality wheat resulting in huge losses during the last one year;

(b) if so, the cause of such losses; and

(c) how the losses are being subsidized?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Technical agreements of MNCs with Indian Companies

†11. SHRI BALKAVI BAIRAGI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Multi National Companies bidding to acquire projects in India could be forced to enter into **a** technical agreements or otherwise with the Indian companies;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government propose to implement the same on the basis of the proposal prepared by the Standing Committee of the Ministry; and

(c) if so. by when it is likely to be implemented along with the details thereof?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.